

House of Commons Debates

FOURTH SESSION—SIXTH PARLIAMENT.

SPEECH OF HON. EDWARD BLAKE, M.P.,

ON THE

FRENCH LANGUAGE IN THE NORTH-WEST.

FRIDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY, 1890.

Mr. BLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to trouble you with very many observations in regard to the speech we have just listened to, or, indeed, to address you at any great length at all. I may say at once, that if any one of the propositions now before the Chair had been thoroughly and entirely satisfactory to my mind, as to the mode in which this question should be dealt with, I should have contented myself with giving a silent vote. It does not happen that either of those propositions commends itself entirely to my mind, and I shall briefly state why that is so, and how, in my poor judgment, this matter should be disposed of. Referring to what the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) has said, his distinguished position for a great many years in this Parliament has led—I do not say at all unjustifiably—to his not infrequently, when announcing his own views on public questions, speaking in the plural. Not infrequently has he followed in the past the course which he pursued to-day, of speaking both positively and affirmatively, and positively and negatively, in regard to the views and assertions, and policies and aspirations of others with whom he was for the time acting; but I am wholly unable to accept the declaration which the hon. member has made to-day in the plural at all. I accept it as far as he is himself concerned. As far as he himself professes that these are his views, his intentions, his opinions and his aspirations, I accept his statement fully and unfeignedly. But, when the hon. gentleman spoke of “we,” of what “we” were intending, what “we” were proposing, what “we” were aiming at, and what “we” were not aiming at, and what “we” were not intending; when he spoke of what the English speaking people of this country intended and insisted upon, and so forth, then I say the hon. gentleman took up a position which, in face of what has been going on in this country for some months past, in face of the declarations of the hon. member who is primarily responsible for this agitation—the hon.

member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy)—in face of the language of this Bill itself, in face of all these things with which we have to deal, I cannot accept. If I could accept it, the question would receive an easy and rapid solution from me. I do not intend to enter into a criticism of the criticisms of the hon. gentleman from North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton). One or two words will suffice for that. The hon. gentleman said, but I hope and think he must have misread his history, that the decrees of ancient Rome, were published in all those portions of the world over which she had authority, only in the tongue of Rome herself. I think history shows us that nothing so inhuman and barbarous as that was done, even in what may be called inhuman and barbarous times. Turning to a more modern example, which he justifiably quotes, an example which is to be regarded by us with the highest attention, interest and respect, he refers to the neighboring Republic, to what has been aimed at and accomplished in that great community, in whose well-being the whole modern world has so deep an interest, of whose constitution the right hon. gentleman opposite has not seldom spoken in terms of deserved admiration as to the great work which was achieved by the men who framed that constitution. Speaking of that example, the hon. member for North Norfolk was unfortunate enough to quote, as an instance of a state where the French language had been stamped out and the great principle which he proclaimed, had been realised in the very initiation of its connection with the nation of which it forms a part, the State of Louisiana. Why, Sir, is not the hon. gentleman aware that, by the original constitution of the State of Louisiana, the French as well as the English language was permitted to be used in the debates of that State, and that that continued until the State of Louisiana by a subsequent determination of its own, under circumstances when the question had ceased to be a grievance, determined—as I believe, though I have no information upon this point—that it should be

blotted out. The fact, however, is this, as stated in a book of authority, the "Cyclopaedia of Political Science":

"The diversity of interests of the French and American citizens, however, formed the more usual dividing line of politics in the State. The former were at least a strong minority, and a singular evidence of its strength was a provision in the Constitution which allowed members of the Legislature to debate either in French or in English."

Mr. CHARLTON. Does the hon. gentleman mean to say that the statutes were printed in French?

Mr. BLAKE. I was not discussing whether the use of the French language was complete in all the technical details. What in the world has the publication of the statutes or the proceedings in the French language to do with the matter? What is involved in that except a paltry \$500 a year for the printing of certain things in the two languages? What is the harm if the people who have to obey the laws are enabled to read them printed in the language which they understand? That is a small question! The great question is included in the power of freely debating in the Legislature in the tongues of the peoples of whom the State is composed. All I care to know in regard to that is that the constitution gave the people of French origin the right to speak in their mother tongue in their own State Legislature. The hon. gentleman has said that this question is a very narrow one, and, as he puts it, it is a comparatively narrow one. He has spoken of the impropriety of what he calls dodging responsibility. He has told us of the want of manliness that would be involved in our placing upon other shoulders the responsibility which we ought to take ourselves, and I confess that I have considerable sympathy with that view. As far as our present information goes, the general principle upon which this question should be dealt with, and I am quite prepared now to state the time when I think it should be dealt with; but I thought a large part of the hon. gentleman's speech was but a poor commentary on the declaration as to dodging responsibility which he made and to which I have just referred, when he iterated and reiterated the statement that "we" have no intention of interfering with vested rights, that "we" have no intention of interfering with the rights of any minority which are secured under the British North America Act, that "we" have no desire to touch any privilege properly reserved, that "we" do not intend to touch it, and that "we" are not touching it now. It appeared to me that these statements were evasive of responsibility, were not merely inconsistent with the Bill which the hon. gentleman is supporting—including the preamble but were fatally inconsistent with the attitude of the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy), and with the general character of the agitation of which this Bill is merely the first fruits. A little later, the hon. gentleman declared that "we," the Anglo-Saxons of this continent—once again taking the plural pronoun, which the hon. gentleman used first when speaking of those with whom he was acting, then when speaking of the English-speaking people of this country, and finally when speaking of the Anglo-Saxon race from the Pole to the Isthmus—he declared their stern determination, by what means might be open to them, to make this country from the North Pole to the Isthmus an Anglo-Saxon

community, and to create a homogeneity of race. Well, it is only a question of means and methods, times and circumstances, opportunities and occasions, by which this result is to be achieved; and the hon. gentleman will find, as I shall proceed to point out presently, that his leader does not propose to relegate the consideration of this question to other generations, to those natural and gradual and insensible operations which furnish the only possible solution of such great questions as he has imported into the debate; but that it is other and more rapid, direct and stringent

I will say more violent methods, that are really proposed to us in this regard. Now, Sir, as I have said, there are underlying questions here, much broader questions than the simple questions dealt with by the enacting clause. And these underlying questions are historically old, no doubt, but they are old with reference to our own policy too; they were raised before the last general election, they were raised by the hon. member for North Simcoe himself in large part, they were raised by a newspaper which was, at that time, the most powerful supporter in the Province of Ontario of hon. gentlemen opposite, and they have since been persisted in, and have since been enlarged. This group of questions are fundamental questions. They embrace topics of creed as well as of race, and the Jesuit affair to which the hon. member referred, was not the cause, was not the origin. It was obviously, it has since been confessed to have been, a mere incident, a mere occasion, taken advantage of as a fit and opportune occasion to bring up one phase, and in various aspects, more than one phase, of this group; a good occasion to bring all up in a manner which would attract the favorable consideration of those to whom they who brought them up sought to address themselves. Now, Sir, I intend to refrain, as far as possible, from discussing this question in any party aspect whatever. It needs to be discussed in its party aspect, it must receive such a discussion at some time, but I do not think this time is the fitting time. I say I hope as far as possible to avoid any question of party in the course of this discussion. I am as anxious as the hon. gentleman is anxious, to say nothing, so far as truth will allow, except conciliatory words, and to deal with this matter in a manner becoming a public man; in such a way that, if my feeble words have any effect at all, they may tend to prevent the calamitous results of which the hon. gentleman this afternoon was complaining, though he, and those who act with him, from the best motives, I have no doubt, have been the prime cause of the realisation of these results to the extent to which they have been up to this time realized. I say, Sir, that if you could deal simply with the enacting clause in this Bill it would be a matter of minor consequence; if you could dissociate that clause from its preamble, from its surroundings, from its past and from its future. But you cannot dissociate it, either from its preamble or from its surroundings or from its past, and still less from its future. These difficulties are in part indicated by the preamble which, as you must expound it upon any fair principle of exposition, I maintain declares for action and principles of action which all good Canadians must disavow instead of assenting to. It is a far-reaching principle. It goes—and the hon. member for North Simcoe, whose legislative and professional ability

we know - intended that it should go, wrote it in order that it should go, far beyond the intent of the enacting clause; and those who agree to that preamble, who give to it to-day their voices and their votes, must set their minds and their political forces to the accomplishment of the ends which we find there embedded. Doubtless our constitutional act may be amended, doubtless the well-understood wishes of the Canadian people can accomplish the amendment of the constitution. The machinery may be cumbersome, and it may be that occasionally, as has happened in the past, upon inadequate representations, changes of no great consequence, but changes still, may be made; and it may be again that very strong representations may, for a time at least, be ineffectual in producing amendment. But in relation to any question the well understood wishes of the Canadian people, in time and place, after due consideration, thoroughly ascertained and forcibly presented must produce an amendment of the constitution; and into the agitations which are necessary in order to execute this preamble, as indicated by the hon. gentleman's own speech, we should be, it is intended that we should be, plunged if we agree to it. Now, what does it say? The hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton), thought that it was a very innocent thing. There was not much in it. He laid a great deal of stress upon the preamble of some other Bill which was passed in some other Legislature, and he thought that preamble was good cause for disallowance here. But now he says that the preamble of this Bill, which is given as the basis of our decision, the cause itself upon which we are called upon to vote, is of very little consequence. It is true, it is the reason for the enactment, it is the moving cause which is given to us, but it is not of much consequence, and is not of much harm.

Mr. CHARLTON. I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon. I cited the words of the Minister of Justice, not my own words.

Mr. BLAKE. Oh, well, I know. I do not care much for that mere throwing of verbal bombshells from one side to the another. We have got to do with the reason of the Bill. The hon. gentleman cited words which I thought he adopted. He agrees with me now that the preamble is of consequence, and that by it we understand what the Bill means. He says that he is prepared to agree with the preamble, and to vote for it. The preamble says:

"Whereas it is expedient, in the interest of the national comity in the Dominion, that there should be community of language among the people of Canada, and that the enactment in the North-West Territories Act allowing the use of the French language should be—"

Repealed? Oh, no.

"should be expunged therefrom: Therefore,"

And it proceeds to enact. Here, then, is the meaning in this preamble, of that community of language, which it is expedient should prevail among the whole people of Canada. The second paragraph of the preamble tells us that the community of language which is declared to be expedient amongst the whole people of Canada, is that community and harmony which prevails, according to the well known fable, between the lion and the lamb; the English is to swallow up the French and the French is to die, that the English may live

and flourish upon it. That is the community which is to exist, the community of language which is expedient; the enactment allowing the use of French is to be expunged; therefore, it is the English language alone that is to be used. Now, Sir, when I read this preamble I confess myself to have been a little puzzled by the word "comity," whose use—

Mr. McARTHUR. I think it is a mistake. I think in truth the word was "unity."

Mr. BLAKE. Well, I am very glad to hear it, because I was about to say that I did not perceive that the word "comity" had any reasonable application to this matter at all. We know what the meaning of that word is, and if ever an improper word could be chosen for the hon. gentleman's Bill, it certainly was the word "comity." But he now tells us, as I presumed, that what he intended by the phrase, was unity, and, therefore, it is in the interests of the national unity of the Dominion, that this result is to take place. Now, Mr. Speaker, in order to the advancement of our national unity, we must agree, if we adopt this preamble, that it is expedient, that we should take all possible steps which are open to us to procure by legal and constitutional means the disallowance of the use of the French language where now it is allowed. That is clear, that is plain, that is obvious, that is logical. Was ever such a lame and impotent conclusion deduced from such important premises, if this question is to cease with this little enacting clause with reference to the North-West Territories? If that which it is expedient for the unity of the Canadian Dominion to abrogate is to be suffered to go on in this chamber, is to be suffered to go on in Canada, is to be suffered to go on in the important Province of Quebec, while our national unity is to be preserved, forsooth, by dealing with a few thousands who now inhabit the North-West Territories? No. These gentlemen represent a very grave condition of affairs. That is not their intention. We all know it is not the intention; it has been admitted not to be the intention at all; we cannot stop here; that would indeed be much cry and little wool. Nor does the hon. gentleman so pretend. In the speech with which he moved the first reading of this Bill he entered into a number of considerations which would have been but remotely relevant to the simple clause of the Bill itself. True he pointed out plainly enough, what was perfectly obvious, that he was not at the moment proposing to do more than deal with the North-West Territories question. But, so far from making that further announcement, which he could not have honestly made, but which was made by the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) to-day, he said simply this. After speaking of the past and the present, he said:

"I have endeavored at all events to make good my statements, that both from within and from without the general opinion prevails that this question has come to the point where it is likely to cause further differences, as it has already caused differences in the Dominion."

Then the hon. gentleman said:

"Come back now, Sir, to the North-West Territories. I am not attempting here, and hon. gentlemen know that at all events in this form of motion, I could not attempt in any way to interfere with any rights under the British North America Act which are guaranteed to the French Canadians of the Province of Quebec and to the French Canadians in this Parliament. I am treating, Sir, of what this Parliament is competent to deal with. I am

treating of the question of the dual language of the North-West Territories."

It is a perfectly correct statement that this is all the legislation proposed by this clause; but the proposition to which we are asked to assent, as the ground work of the legislation proposed, obliges us to proceed by all lawful ways and means to secure, in the interests of the national unity of the Dominion, the application of that principle in those other places where certainly the contrary principle now prevails, is potent and effectual for good or for evil according to the diversities of opinions on this subject, potent and effectual to an infinitely greater extent than its application can be either now or for 50 years to come in the North-West Territories of Canada. But I say we are not confined to the hon. gentleman's preamble nor to his speech here. We find in a recent speech delivered in this city to what is called the Equal Rights Association statements which deal with this question, and which deal with it in a manner showing that he at all events does not shrink from the application of the motto which the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), cited last night, the motto "Thorough." The hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton), said we are not talking of interfering or proposing to interfere with the use of the French language, with reading, writing or speaking it. Nothing of that kind, he said, is talked or thought of; it is simply this question of using it in the North-West Legislature, and, as the hon. gentleman repeated, this dreadful grievance of the statutes and ordinances being printed in the French language. But that is not the view of the hon. member for Simcoe. I find these statements in a speech delivered by him as late as 12th December last, within a few yards of this building. He said that Lord Durham had held first, and above all things, that the French language must be stamped out. And the hon. gentleman gave his own personal opinion that without a shadow of doubt Lord Durham was right. It is not, therefore, a question of an occasional French speech in Parliament which bores the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy) and the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton), or of their being troubled by the fact that copies of the Debates and of the statutes are printed in French, in a tongue with which they are not as familiar as with their mother tongue; but the language must be stamped out, says the hon. member for North Simcoe. The hon. gentleman proceeded:

"Is there a shadow of doubt that between these two races, of all races in the world, if they are ever to be united, it must be by obliteration of one of these languages and by the teaching in one of these tongues."

I should judge, I hope I am not mistaken, that the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton), does not mean that the English language should be obliterated; if so, it must be the French language. Then, the hon. member for North Simcoe drew upon his experience as a parliamentarian, and declared he had observed that more French was now spoken in the House than formerly, an observation, I must confess, entirely at variance with my experience, which is somewhat longer in this House than that of the hon. gentleman. I quite admit that the course which the hon. gentleman and others have pursued, will very naturally lead to a larger quantity of French speaking in this House than has prevailed hitherto, but I do say

there is nothing more marked, than the change which has taken place since I first entered Parliament, with respect to this question of French speaking. Then, the hon. member for North Simcoe proceeded to point out that our constitution is amendable in regard to the use of the French language in Quebec and in Canada, and he gave the precedents which showed the truth of that statement, that the constitution is amendable. And what did he go on to say! He went on to say that the precedents in that sense are very useful and may be acted on in the year 1890 or '91 in this connection. What! Are we going to relegate this matter to some distant age to be disposed of finally by the action of the French Canadians; when the leader (Mr. McCarthy) tells us that in 1890 or '91 the precedents which prove the possibility of altering the British North America Act, so as to obliterate the use of the French language are useful and may become available forthwith? Then the hon. gentleman stated that we ought not to remain in this position forever, and there should be sufficient patriotism in the Dominion to produce the change foreshadowed. Nor was his speech confined to the question of language, it touched creed as well; for I find him asking the people whom he was addressing, and through them the people of the whole Dominion, to give him power to eliminate those parts of the constitution which were inimical to the public weal; and he followed that statement by the question—indicating the parts of the constitution which he regarded as inimical to the public weal, and which he proposed that the people of the country should give him power to eliminate—

"Are we to have Separate Schools in Upper Canada, tithe assessments in Lower Canada, dual language in the Dominion Parliament, and dual languages in Quebec, the North-West and Manitoba?"

And he again called for power to obliterate what he called those obnoxious clauses. I, therefore, expected that the hon. member for Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy) would not adopt the line which the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) has adopted. I expected that, while he would perhaps leave rather in the background those other questions, he would say nothing which was inconsistent with his preceding utterances, nothing which would be likely to limit the effect of the preamble to which he asked the assent of the House; nothing which would interfere with or check the triumphant march of his friends in pursuit of the great purpose which had been before developed, and which was further and fully developed in advance of the meeting of Parliament by the speech to which I have referred. This Bill, then, is only the opening of the campaign; and it lays down in itself, so far as the question of language is concerned, which is all it deals with, lines quite broad enough for the contemplated movement; and, I repeat, that its past and its present and its surroundings are all important elements; they indicate its future; and they entirely overshadow the little enacting clause. For those who, like the hon. gentlemen, have spoken in that sense in this House, who believe that these things are essentially in the interests of the Dominion of Canada, there is, and I am not in the slightest degree complaining of it, there is for them but one course to pursue, the course of agitation. It is their right, nay more, it is their bounden duty, if their conscientious convictions

be, and I am far from saying they are not so, that the condition of things in this whole Dominion, is such that its future prosperity and progress will be served and advanced by such an agitation as is necessary for the attainment of such results as are indicated, to enter upon and pursue that path of agitation. We may as well settle what it is that we are called upon to meet; what that condition of things is with which it is proposed that we should deal. I say that that honesty of conviction which I freely accord to the hon. member for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy), (and which I am bound to accord to him as to any public man), involves, as a necessary consequence, that he should prosecute the agitation upon the lines he laid down on the 12th of December last and at other times, as the line of policy essential to this Dominion. If it were otherwise, I can conceive no language strong enough for the denunciation of his conduct in the utterance of these sentiments. Now, Sir, for those of us who believe—I speak for myself only—but for myself and for any other person who happens to believe that in our existing conditions the objects aimed at are, by the means proposed, absolutely impossible of attainment; for those who believe that the agitation does, as to the Province of Quebec, not merely not present any element whatever of success, but destroys the least prospect of reform from that source from which alone the reforms which these hon. gentlemen desire can be looked for, namely, from within, from the spontaneous action of the people themselves? for those who believe that it not merely does not improve, but that it tends to imperil the conditions of certain minorities of race and certain minorities in creed in different parts of the Dominion; that it excuses, if it does not absolutely justify, the combinations of populations on lines of race and creed which the hon. gentleman so earnestly deprecated this afternoon; for those who believe that it tends to produce and to intensify the greatest political evils which it is possible to conceive for Canada, and that it imperils the best hopes which remain to Canada; for me, Sir, who believe all these things, and for any others who may believe with me, there remains only the course of firm and uncompromising opposition from the start, to the course of the hon. gentleman. "*Obsta principis*." I decline to permit the thin end of the wedge to be inserted; not with the guile which I might not unjustly attribute to the remarks of the hon. member for North Norfolk, nor yet with the hammer of the hon. member for North Simcoe, who has told us plainly the strokes he intends to give to that wedge and the vigor with which he intends with it to rift and cleave this Dominion. Now, Sir, I profess to be, and I hope I am a Reformer. I have never concealed my opinion; I have always at those times and places, and under those circumstances in which I thought I might do good by it, announced the opinion that there are many things to be reformed in the different Provinces of this Dominion, and many things to be reformed in the Dominion as a whole. There are many things I should desire to see reformed in the Province of Quebec as well as in other Provinces. But I know full well,—such little knowledge of history as I have acquired, such knowledge of human nature as fifty-six years have given me, have taught me that impertinent interference; still more that threats

of coercive interference, and agitations to withdraw acquired and provincial rights are the very surest means to destroy the slightest vestige of hope of reform. They give to the resisting party incalculable advantages. They enshrine the sentiment of nationality, the sentiment of provincial autonomy, the feeling of outraged dignity and of insulted authority in opposition to the intruders. And under cover of these defences, resistance is easy and its success is certain; while where the opportunity occurs aggressive action is but too likely to ensue. That is the condition of things, Sir, which I believe will be accomplished by the efforts that are now being made. I regard the prospect of reforms which I myself should desire to see accomplished in the Province of Quebec, as removed—I will not say to an incalculable but to a very long distance by this agitation even so far as it has gone. I regard that prospect as absolutely vanished, should this agitation receive the support and countenance to any considerable extent of this House and of the people of the Dominion at large. No, Sir, the fullest and the frankest recognition of the provincial and covenanted rights; the evidence which we shall give within the domain of our power in the various Provinces of Canada, of a generous and liberal consideration for those minorities which are under our control; combined with a sympathetic interest in the welfare of our neighbors give titles—just titles—to friendly suggestions to helpful advice, to legitimate influence. Nor have I despaired in the past; nor when this cloud passes away shall I despair in the future for the recognition of those titles. At any rate I am on the side of those who shall stand by those minorities who are, as I have pointed out, threatened and proposed to be coerced (by constitutional means I admit, but it is not the less threat and coercion, however constitutionally you may do it) by the policy the hon. member for North Simcoe has foreshadowed. I am on their side; and I believe that any other attitude is impotent for good, and powerful for evil to the state.

It being six o'clock the Speaker left the chair.

After Recess.

Mr. BLAKE. Mr. Speaker, we have heard something to-day—of what I fear we shall hear more of in Canada for some time—of a union of race and a union of creed. This question is not unfamiliar to my ears. In days long gone by I found myself, as my predecessor in the leadership of the Liberal party found himself, as my successor in that leadership, I dare say, may find himself, confronted with attempts to unite and consolidate in the ranks of one party those of one nationality, and to consolidate in the ranks of one party those of one creed. This question is not new in Canada. Those attempts I met by no private bargain or intrigue; I met them by frank statements in this House and on public platforms of my views on the questions of race and creed, and of the rights and interests of minorities; I met them by an effort to convince those most particularly concerned that there were no real grounds for those attempts—attempts which I deprecated then, as I deprecate them now, as public calamities—and by the assurance that my fellow countrymen of all creeds and all races might differ and agree, accord-

ing to their opinions on political topics, with absolute confidence as to the safety of the rights peculiar to themselves on questions of race and creed. That assurance, I believe I could well give; that assurance I hope this debate will enable us in Canada still to give; but largely on the issues of this debate does the question of that assurance turn. Sir, at all times and in all countries minorities are inclined to be susceptible, jealous, apprehensive, exacting—such is the condition of human nature. Those who are in minorities feel it; and those who happen to be in majorities, though they may complain of it, ought to understand it too. Minorities are apt to believe that they must unite in order to protect themselves against aggression; and such union amongst themselves, and such consequent isolation from their fellow countrymen, is, wherever it occurs, and just in proportion to the extent of its occurrence, a serious danger to the state. But this is oftentimes excusable, and sometimes even justifiable; and in the face of such attacks as those to which I referred this afternoon, I am not able in any strong language to condemn, although I do not intend to applaud, and although I still most earnestly deprecate, any such attempt at union. I am speaking this day mainly in the hope to avert, if by any feeble effort of mine I can avert, the continued existence of those apprehensions which might be a justification, or at any rate an excuse, for such union. Sir, in times of gloom and depression as to the future of my country—perhaps I am not an optimist, perhaps I have taken and may take now in many aspects a view too gloomy as to the condition and prospects of Canada, but in times in which I have felt gloom and depression as to the prospects and future of my country, as to its progress in several of the respects which are essential to the making of a nation, I have had in these latter years the consolation of believing that, in whatever other respects we might be stationary, perhaps, even, I am ashamed to say, retrograde, in the respect at any rate of tolerance and regard to the rights and privileges and susceptibilities of minorities, we were moving on slowly, steadily moving on to a higher plane. And that consolation was, to my mind, a very great one. But although I did so believe, as I shall still venture to entertain that hope, I knew well that all this time there were great masses of prejudice and suspicion, of ancient hates and misconceptions, and bitter memories of former conflicts, lying ready to the hand of the incendiary, easy to be kindled, difficult to be extinguished; and that the proportions of the conflagration which they might excite were impossible to be calculated in advance. Sir, we have but just heard of an event we must all deeply deplore. The great institution, the crown and glory, I may be permitted to say, of the educational institutions of our country, is at this moment in flames; and we know not how small a spark may have kindled the great fire which is consuming that ornament to the whole community of Canada, the University of Toronto. That ornament, a great material ornament, and a still greater exhibition of the triumphs of the principles of toleration and of our advance in higher education, a university where we have gathered together the youth of all denominations, Protestant and Catholic, under the sanction even of the Catholic Church, a State institution on non-sectarian principles,

where all were gathered together as fellow subjects to acquire the highest training that the land afforded is now, so far as its material fabric goes, a ruin tottering to the ground. But great through the calamity, the material fabric may be replaced. Just as by that great calamity we may observe how small a spark may kindle a great fire, so let us take warning in this larger sphere, in the still greater matter upon which we are now engaged; and let those who are seeking to set the heather afire upon this question be careful before they proceed to precipitate a moral ruin which may be irreparable. Let them remember that it is utterly impossible to calculate the results of the issues and the passions they are raising. Sir, I knew not merely that there were questions of prejudice and of misconception, of passion and of bigotry, of ancient hate and ancient difficulties; but I knew more. I am not of those who take the optimistic view that in all respects our path is easier and smoother because of our peculiar conditions in Canada; I am not of those who believe that our path is made plainer and straighter by the circumstances of different nationalities and of different creeds. I have recognised the fact that our situation, such as it is, presents problems of very considerable difficulty—perhaps problems of very considerable danger—and that we might have, if Providence had so ordered our lot that we were a homogeneous people, all of one race, one tongue, and one creed, an easier path, a plainer road, in which to travel. I have recognised those difficulties with which we may have to grapple some day; though I hope, if we are to succeed, at some other time and in some different spirit and on some other lines than are proposed to-day. I knew that those real difficulties added great force and strength to the baser elements which form the greater part, after all, of the troubles with which we were and are encompassed; I knew the risk and the loss which was to be encountered in the Province which I may call an English and Protestant Province—the province of Ontario—by acting for those whom we served on the path on which we were then travelling; and we encountered it deliberately at that time. Nor shall we, I hope shrink from it to-day. The right will triumph in the end. There is an old proverb in the language which my hon. friend would proscribe: “*Tout casse, tout lasse, tout passe*”; and even this storm, this agitation, though its proportions may be as great as my hon. friend expects and perhaps justly expects, will pass away; with serious consequences may be to those who are engaged in the contest, but it will pass away in the end; and what is right and true will in the end prevail, though some of us may fall in the struggle. On what conditions, circumstanced as we are, can we live and thrive and grow in Canada? Certainly not on the lines which are being laid down by those engaged in this agitation. I would ask them to put themselves in the French Canadian's place. You may selfishly wish that he had agreed to be suppressed; you may have a profound conviction of the incomparable superiority of your tongue, your laws, your creed; you may earnestly desire for all men the inestimable boons of British birth, of English speech, of Protestant religion. But still, after all, cannot you put yourself in his place? And can you not, must you not, admire the courage, the fidelity, and the determination with which, at great odds, he fought in all fields—in the legislature, before the

people, and in even sterner fields than these for what to him was as dear as what you call your birthright is to you? Fought, aye, and conquered too! Cannot you recognise that his was after all a victory for humanity? And that if, as the case is, it has imposed greater difficulties and more arduous efforts and toils on those who are engaged in making a nation of Canada, it yet, by that very circumstance, gave the chance for more exalted triumphs, gave an opening for the exhibition of still higher and deeper and broader feelings of justice and liberality and tolerance than are permitted to a wholly homogeneous people? Can you not at least see if that much you cannot see that he has in fact conquered? Do you seriously hope to prevail to-day in a conflict in which, under infinitely greater disadvantages, he obtained the victory long ago? Surely if it were a conquest in which he was in the wrong, you have the right to struggle still; but his victory after all was for equal rights—rights equal with your own. That is all he asked; that is all he got. But you say: No; his language must be obliterated; it is inimical to the Constitution that it should continue; you must teach him your tongue; he must forget his own; he must not have what he regards—and, from his point of view, rightly regards—as equal rights with you, the Anglo-Saxon, of whom the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) spoke so proudly this afternoon as destined by fate to swallow him up. Sir, I regard this larger question to which I have referred, and it is the real question we have to consider, as a settled question; and even were my views as to the settlement different from what they are, I would not consent, as a public man, to an attempt to reopen a controversy, long since closed, on grounds which do not give to my eye the least prospect of success, but which ensure ultimate defeat to the assailants, and meanwhile limitless disaster to the state. I say: No, a thousand times, no! Whether you differ or agree as to what might have been best for the country, in the situation of the country as it stands, I say: No, a thousand times, no; to the least effort or proposal to reopen that settled controversy; and I maintain that it is the duty of those who truly regard the progress and the prosperity of Canada, who hope to see it advance in its path towards nationality; to defend the rights of the minorities in this regard, as by law and by convention and by national settlement established. I intend for my part to defend them just as warmly as if I were one of themselves; and I should regard myself as dishonored and disgraced if I were now to yield to the forces which press me to any other course. It is not difficult to drive most of us, perhaps—it is certainly not difficult to drive the humble individual who addresses you from his place in this Parliament; but I hope it is impossible to drive me, as long as I occupy that place, from the path of duty and of honor, which I believe to be the path which I have chalked out in the words I have now spoken. To this Bill, under these circumstances, I should record an unhesitating negative, if that were the question presented immediately to the House. I do not desire to enlarge upon the lessons of history, of which we have heard much in this debate; but I wish to call your attention to two very recent formal, and to my mind, solemn expressions of opinion, expressions of British opinion, of the opinions of the English Government upon questions closely

allied to this. You remember the long and complicated and difficult controversy with reference to Schleswig Holstein. In 1800, the English Government proposed to Denmark to allow Schleswig, one of the duchies, independently to decide upon the language to be used where the Danish people prevailed, where the Germans prevailed, and where the races were mixed. That was the character of the dispatch, that the community itself should decide, and that regard should be had to the various languages of the populations, thus giving a plain indication at that comparatively recent date, of the view of the British Government, under the Secretariat for foreign affairs of Lord John Russell, in regard to that question. Again in 1802 and 1863, unhappy, broken-down, disintegrated and enslaved Poland, regarded by the great powers as no longer possessing the capacities for an independent state, but as a people under the thrall of Russia, had broken out once again into insurrection, under the pressure of some fresh severities of its Russian masters; and three of the great powers of Europe agreed together to remonstrate with Russia as to its course towards the Poles—I can hardly say towards Poland, but towards the Poles. Who were they? Great Britain, France and Austria. They remonstrated with Russia. Russia asked them to formulate the points upon which they suggested her lines of policy towards Poland should proceed. Those three powers formulated, by conjoint action, six points, and one of the six points on which they recommended to Russia action towards Poland, circumstanced as Poland was, and so late as the year 1863, was the use of the Polish language in the public offices and in the law courts. That was the advice given by Great Britain, France and Austria to Russia, interfering with its course towards its own subjects, who had been handed over to it by a proceeding which no one can read without condemning, but handed over and having become, so to speak, its property long before. And, at that late date, the recommendation was that the step taken should be reversed, that the abrogation of the right to use their own language should be withdrawn, and that the Poles should have the right to use their own language in the courts and the public offices. I do not deny, as I have already said, our difficulties in this country. I repeat that those difficulties are serious; and I hope that those of us who now act on the lines which I have been suggesting will be recognised as having earned in proper time and proper place, the right to be listened to with favorable ears in case we do tender proper advice as to what we believe, in the true interests of minorities, and in the true interest of Canada, should be done in regard to these difficult and delicate questions. I hope also that our attitude may not be mistaken by either friend or foe, either by those we serve or those we oppose, by the minorities in whose cause we are prepared to stand up or by the majorities whom many of us represent, as being that of an unworthy truckling to either race or creed. I should like to ask what have the majority of the representatives of Ontario constituencies to gain by adopting the course which I have chalked out for myself? Let others speak for themselves. I know that the only gain I can have for myself is risk and loss. Nothing but that. We shall then claim our right to speak firmly and frankly on all fit occasions and on

all burning questions, and we shall ask the consideration which we are now granting. Having said so much, I ask how should this Bill, brought forward in the frame which it has assumed, with the preamble by which it is prefaced, with the speech in which it was introduced, with the speeches by which out of doors it was heralded, having regard to the movement of which I have said it is the first fruits—how should this Bill be met? I am prepared to meet such a Bill, so introduced, so framed, so prefaced, with an uncompromising negative. But it has seemed to be the temper of the House to meet it with some substantive declaration. I shall not object to that; but for myself I am not fully satisfied with either of the declarations which have been proposed. I am of opinion that, if we do formulate a declaration, it should contain a distinct and unequivocal repudiation of the principle of the preamble of this Bill, and should vindicate the ground on which we stand, as to the question raised by the enacting clause. In these respects and also because I am not prepared for myself to affirm all the language contained in the second amendment—for example the statement that the enactment would put in doubt the stability of our institutions—I think that amendment is not wholly applicable to the situation; nor do I think the first amendment is what we require either. I think there is apart from the suggestions of policy, no present grievance of any account. The money question is absolutely nothing. The amount is trifling, and this Parliament pays it; and the hon. gentleman who proposes the Bill (Mr. McCarthy) has cheerfully voted for and supported the payment of hundreds of thousands of dollars. I might say millions of expenditure much less defensible than the \$400 or \$500 a year which are expended to convey to the French people of the North-West, few as they may be, a knowledge of the ordinances of the country in which they live. Now, Sir, what is the condition of our country with respect to the North-West? We have spent many scores of millions mainly in connection with the North-West. Our crying need to-day is, and will for a long time be, settlement, the influx of hardy and frugal cultivators of the soil. The Province of Ontario is being bled to-day partly to meet that demand. Her farms have fallen in price; and that fall, very notably in the eastern section of the Province, is partly due to the altered conditions of supply and demand, partly also due, no doubt, to unfavorable seasons, partly due to low prices, due to a combination of circumstances, in which however, the North-West is a large factor. I say that fall would have been very much more marked than it is to-day, if it had not been for that influx of French Canadian settlers into the east, which this agitation seems almost designed to prevent; which certainly is regarded as no unmixed blessing by those who are engaged in the agitation, so far as the Province of Ontario is concerned. For my own part, I take ground altogether different from those gentlemen on that subject; I heartily welcome our French fellow-countrymen who prefer Ontario to the States. I hope they will continue to prefer it; I hope that they will come in, just as many of them as have come in, and buy our farms from those who want to sell them, and who will not complain, however much other people may create grievances in another Province, if they get a better price than they otherwise might by reason of altered conditions in the law of supply and

demand. I say that while Ontario is being bled at this moment and in this way, the Province of Quebec is being bled too, not so much by migration to the North-West; but she is being bled mainly to the entire loss of Canada, and to the profit of the neighboring Republic. I think the most important object to which we can practically address ourselves, is the diversion of that emigration to the States to migration to the North-West Territories. I do not hope myself for any substantial measure of success whatever from projects of repatriation. I believe that the French Canadian whom you let go to the States, and who settles there, you have practically lost forever. There may be cases of return, but, speaking in the large, such, I regret to say, is my belief of the result. Nor can I say that I entertain any very high or sanguine hopes, judging by experience, of Quebec migration on a large scale to the North-West. But still there is in that respect a hope, there ought to be a hope. If it is the case that we are unable to persuade our own people from the Province of Quebec, agriculturists, to move to those fertile plains of which my hon. friend from North Norfolk gave such a glowing description, if it is the case that we are unable to persuade them to move there, and that they still prefer the Eastern or the Western States to Canada, then how can we hope for any great immigration from abroad? I say that we ought to address ourselves to that problem to which I have referred, in an earnest, an active, an energetic manner. But I conceive that the temper and spirit displayed in this Parliament and displayed in the North-West itself in this matter, may be very important factors as to the success of any such effort. I decline to abandon the hope of considerable immigration. I believe that if the people of the North-West Territories will consider of the matter, if those few thousands of souls who are scattered, specks hardly discernible, through that vast territory, will but realise the fact that industrious, hardy, frugal, economical, cultivators of the soil are leaving old Canada, not for new Canada, but for the States, they will hold out their arms, they will welcome warmly those whom we might induce to go out there. Are you going to induce them to do so by such proposals as this? I am for trying out the experiment; I am for continuing every inducement, the sentimental inducement if you please, as well as other inducements, until that experiment is fully and fairly tried out. In face of this agitation to which I have, all through what I have said, alluded, as the main and important, the overshadowing feature of this discussion, I should regard the immediate adoption of a proposal to expunge such little use of the French tongue as is now provided for, as fatal to whatever prospect there may be of an increasing or of a continuing French migration to the North-West. I say that the future will indicate to us the solution of this question, and that it should be reserved until the future speaks and gives us that indication. I agree with something that has been said by the hon. member for North Norfolk as to the people of the North-West. They are, so far as their rights, their constitutional rights are concerned, in a transition condition. They have not asked, they feel themselves that they are not yet in a position to claim the full measure of provincial rights. It would be entirely premature so to deal with these enormous areas of fertile territory in the present

conditions of settlement and of occupation, and to turn them into Provinces. All sides are agreed on that. The people of the locality, but also the people of Canada, are deeply interested in the policy to be pursued in the North-West. Canada has, in truth, if you consider the enormous areas that she has to settle, the enormous expenditure she has made and is making—she has, in truth, the main interest, an interest far surpassing that of the few people who are now there. But fortunately for old Canada, and fortunately for those people, it is a common interest. There is not the slightest divergence of interest. There may be differences of opinion as to what are the best means of advancing that interest, but the interests are one and the same: the prosperity of the North-West is the one interest of both; and the proper step to take in order to advance that prosperity is the question submitted to both; and upon that question the Parliament of Canada, in the present condition of the North-West and of the people of that country, must speak; I will not say with a despotic voice, I will not at all say with a voice regardless of the opinion of the Territories, but still at this moment, having the responsibility, with a decisive and potential voice. Now, under these circumstances, I say, we should meet the question when it comes. The hon. gentleman has suggested that we have heard the opinion of the North-West. I should have great, though not absolutely decisive regard to that expression deliberately and constitutionally reached, but I deny that we have yet heard it. The North-West Assembly had no commission or authority from this Parliament, its creators, to deal with this question at all; and the electors to that assembly had not before them, when the assembly was elected, any proposition upon this subject. So, neither was there an authority in the body, nor was there a mandate from the constituency. It may be, it is quite possible, that even upon a full and calm consideration, after the interval of time which is to elapse between now and the next appeal to the people, it may be that there may be a very strong expression of opinion there, as to what is for their interests; but in the meantime it is not to be entirely forgotten that the condition is only this, that the Parliament of Canada votes out of Canadian resources a trifling sum annually for the payment of the printing in the two languages of their ordinances; and that if they choose to elect a Frenchman to the assembly, that Frenchman has what, I am afraid, would be a very barren privilege, the right of expressing his sentiments in that assembly, in what, to the majority of them, I am afraid, would be something like an unknown tongue. There is the condition of things. No particular grievance, therefore, now exists, and the condition upon which you are to deal with the question is to be settled, as I have said, in the future. If, when you have tried the experiment, if when you have used all fair exertions, if when you have given all fair inducements, you still find that country is, even to the extent to which it now is proportionately, an English country, why the question will settle

itself. If, what I would rejoice to see in the face of all that has been said in my Province and elsewhere, there should be a large immigration of Frenchmen to the North-West, and that settlement should be mixed, the condition might be practically the same. If that settlement were, what I would not prefer myself, isolated, it might create a condition of things demanding different treatment. Let us deal with it when the condition arises and as the condition exists; and when we do deal with it, let us deal with it, not associated with the efforts which have been made, the apprehensions which have been raised, the hostilities which have been excited by the proceedings of which this Bill is the first outcome, but entirely dissociated from all these, having meantime finally and altogether settled, as far as the opinion of the Parliament of Canada can settle, the other questions, the greater questions, the more important questions in regard to which this Bill seems to be but a sort of pilot balloon. Sir, I have endeavored to set forth in the draft of an amendment such a form of words as, without at all being wedded to that precise form, seems to me to indicate the most appropriate solution of this question, and, if the opportunity is offered to me in the course of this discussion, by any process, I shall take leave to submit that proposition to the chamber; and in order that hon. members may know what the proposition which at all events would very respectfully submit for their consideration, I shall now, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, read it:

"This House doth, having regard to the long continued use of the French language in old Canada, and to the covenants on that subject embodied in the British North America Act, agree to the declaration contained in the said bill as the basis thereof, that it is expedient in the interest of the national unity of the Dominion that there should be community of language amongst the people of Canada.

"That, on the contrary, this House declares its inviolable adherence to the covenants in respect to the use of the French language in Quebec and Canada, and its determination to resist any attempt to impair those covenants.

"That as to such use of the French language in the North-West Territories, as is now provided by law, it is in the best interests of Canada at large and of the Territories in particular that inducements should be held out to the emigrating inhabitants of each of the Provinces to settle in the Territories, whose greatest want is population.

"That the expunging of the provisions allowing the use of the French language in the Territories is not required to remedy any practical grievance at this time, and would, under existing circumstances, lessen the chances of a French Canadian immigration.

"That it is expedient to leave those provisions undisturbed, and to defer any decision as to the ultimate solution of the question until time shall have further developed the conditions of North-West settlement."

On these lines, or on lines like these, I would invite this House to act; to these considerations, however feebly set forth, I would invite the earnest and dispassionate attention of my fellow countrymen. This I feel is for Canada a turning point. I see but dimly; I may not see aright; but, if I at all discern the signs of the times, until Canadians on such lines agree, there will be for Canada neither progress, prosperity, nor peace.